

REMARKS

Filed concurrently herewith is a Request for a One Month Extension of Time which extends the shortened statutory period for response to October 9, 2004. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that this response is being timely filed.

The Official Action dated June 9, 2004 has been received and its contents carefully noted. In view thereof, claims 1 and 3 have been canceled in their entirety without prejudice nor disclaimer of the subject matter set forth therein and claims 2, 4, 5, 11-15 and 17 have been amended in order to better define that which Applicants regard as the invention. Accordingly, claims 2 and 4-17 are presently pending in the instant application.

Initially, Applicants note with appreciation, the Examiner's indication in paragraph 8 of the Office Action, that claims 2 and 4-16 have been objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim but would be rewritten in independent form including all the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. As can be seen from the foregoing amendments, each of claims 2, 4, 5 and 11-15 have been amended in order to recite the subject matter set forth therein in independent form. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that these claims as well as those claims which depend therefrom continue to distinguish over the prior art of record and are in proper condition for allowance.

With reference now to paragraphs 3-5 of the Office Action, claims 1 and 3 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent Publication No. 2003/0123567 A1 issued to Shigemasa et al. This rejection is respectfully traversed in that the patent publication to Shigemasa et al. neither discloses nor remotely suggests that which is presently set forth by Applicants' claimed invention.

Again, as can be seen from the foregoing amendments, independent claim 1 as well as dependent claim 3 have been canceled in their entirety without prejudice nor disclaimer of the

subject matter therein. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that further discussion with respect to the merits of the rejection of claims 1 and 3 is no longer believed to be warranted.

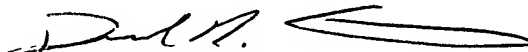
With reference now to paragraphs 6 and 7 of the Office Action, claim 17 has been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(e) as being unpatentable over Shigemasa et al. in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,496,549 B1 issued to Crawford. This rejection is likewise respectfully traversed in that the combination proposed by the Examiner fails to disclose or suggest that which is presently set forth by Applicants' claimed invention.

As can be seen from the foregoing amendments, dependent claim 17 has been amended in order to now depend from allowable independent claim 2, as amended. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that dependent claim 17 is now in proper condition for allowance and further discussion with respect to the rejection of claim 17 in view of the combination proposed by the Examiner is no longer believed to be warranted.

Therefore, in view of the foregoing it is respectfully requested that the rejections of record be reconsidered and withdrawn by the Examiner, that claims 2 and 4-17 be allowed and that the application be passed to issue.

Should the Examiner believe a conference would be of benefit in expediting the prosecution of the instant application, he is hereby invited to telephone counsel to arrange such a conference.

Respectfully submitted,


Donald R. Studebaker
Reg. No. 32,815

Nixon Peabody LLP
401 9th Street, NW
Suite 900
Washington, D. C. 20004
(202) 585-8000